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## **The Interactive Effect of a Leader's Sense of Uniqueness and Sense of Belongingness on Followers' Perceptions of Leader Authenticity**

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# Journal of Business Ethics

## The Interactive Effect of a Leader's Sense of Uniqueness and Sense of Belongingness on Followers' Perceptions of Leader Authenticity --Manuscript Draft--

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**The Interactive Effect of a Leader's Sense of Uniqueness and Sense of  
Belongingness on Followers' Perceptions of Leader Authenticity**

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All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

# ANTECEDENTS OF FOLLOWERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEADER AUTHENTICITY

## **The Interactive Effect of a Leader's Sense of Uniqueness and Sense of Belongingness on Followers' Perceptions of Leader Authenticity**

## Abstract

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Researchers have emphasized the value of authenticity, but not much is known about what makes a person authentic in the eyes of others. Our research takes an interpersonal perspective to examine the determinants of followers' perception of leader authenticity. Building on social identity theory, we propose that two fundamental self-identifications - a leader's sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness - interact to influence followers' perceptions of a leader's authenticity via perceptions of a leader's self-concept consistency. In a field study conducted among leader-follower dyads and in a controlled laboratory experiment, we find that when a leader feels a low sense of belongingness, there is a positive relationship between a leader's sense of uniqueness and perceptions of leader authenticity. When a leader feels a low sense of uniqueness, there is a positive relationship between a leader's sense of belongingness and perceptions of leader authenticity. This is because followers perceive this leader as having high self-concept consistency.

*Keywords:* sense of belongingness; sense of uniqueness; perceived leader authenticity; self-concept consistency; social identity theory

“The authentic self is soul made visible.”

- Sarah Ban Breathnach

## Introduction

In 2016, the Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton lost the election against the Republican candidate Donald Trump. Although many reasons were given for her loss, one noteworthy one was her “inauthenticity” (Whalen 2016). The issue of “inauthenticity” has haunted Clinton throughout her political career. Politician Erin Elmore commented: “It’s very, very difficult to connect with her because she didn’t have a real identity.... And that’s what we just see more and more of. Instead of her becoming relatable and a real person, she just, as I said earlier, seems more robotic, and I think that’s a big part of why she didn’t win” (Henney 2017). As Forbes summarized, “unlike Bernie Sanders, she’s reinvented herself over the course of this campaign and her career – to the point of inconsistency, inauthenticity and a failure to connect with younger voters” (Whalen 2016). Why did voters perceive Clinton as being inauthentic? This puzzle boils down to our research question: what determines people’s perception of a target’s authenticity?

Knowing, accepting, and remaining true to one’s self are regarded as humans’ moral imperative by philosophers and scholars (Harter 2002). The tripartite model of authenticity suggests that being authentic involves three aspects: a match between conscious awareness and actual experience (i.e., low self-alienation), being true to oneself in most situations and living in accordance with one’s values and beliefs (i.e., high authentic living), and believing one does not have to accept influence from others or conform to their expectations (i.e., rejection of external influence) (Wood et al. 2008). Given that one’s authenticity guides how the “self” interacts with others in the external world, perceived authenticity, that is, the extent to which others perceive a target as authentic, should be associated with positive interpersonal outcomes (Brunell et al. 2010; Wickham 2013). However, only recently,

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1 scholars have started to examine the effects of perceived authenticity on interpersonal  
2 outcomes. To date, studies have shown that perceived partner authenticity is positively  
3 associated with the perceiver's relationship goals, interpersonal trust, and relationship  
4 satisfaction (Wickham 2013).  
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10 Given the potential benefits of interpersonal perceptions of authenticity, it is  
11 surprising that we do not know much about what determines interpersonal perceptions of  
12 authenticity. The majority of studies in the authenticity literature have relied on self-reported  
13 authenticity and examined antecedents of felt authenticity. To date, studies have shown that  
14 self-concept consistency (Schlegel et al. 2009), power (Kraus et al. 2011), mood (Lenton et al.  
15 2013), needs such as autonomy, relatedness, competence and self-esteem (Heppner et al.  
16 2008), the ideal self (Slabu et al. 2014), self-consciousness (Goldman and Kernis, 2002;  
17 Koole and Kuhl, 2003), and task involvement and immersion (i.e., flow) (Turner and Billings  
18 1991; Lenton et al. 2016) predict felt authenticity. Although it is important to identify  
19 antecedents of a target person's felt authenticity, in order for the target person and his or her  
20 interaction partner to realize the interpersonal benefits, authenticity should not only be felt by  
21 the target person but also recognized by the interaction partner. To start filling this gap in the  
22 literature, our research examines antecedents of interpersonal perceptions of authenticity in  
23 leader-follower relationships. Specifically, we examine antecedents of followers' perceptions  
24 of leader authenticity.  
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46 To examine antecedents of followers' perceptions of leader authenticity, it is  
47 important to adopt a clear definition of authenticity. Leader authenticity has started receiving  
48 attention among leadership scholars in the last decade (Clapp-Smith et al. 2009). Previous  
49 studies have been mainly based on a concept that is related to, but different from, authenticity;  
50 that is, authentic leadership. It is a leadership style that comprises four components: balanced  
51 processing, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness  
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(Walumbwa et al. 2008). Such a broad view of leader authenticity is not shared by all authenticity researchers (see e.g., Cooper et al. 2005, Shamir and Eilam 2005; Sparrowe, 2005) because it leads to conceptual overlap between authentic leadership and other leadership types, such as ethical leadership (Brown and Treviño 2006; Gardner et al. 2011) and transformational leadership (see Banks et al. 2016 and Hoch et al. 2016 for meta-analytic reviews). Given these limitations, the present paper adopts the tripartite model of authenticity which views authenticity as being reflected in three correlated, lower-order dimensions: self-alienation, authentic living, and external influence (Wood et al. 2008). This definition is theory-based and captures a general level of authenticity that reflects whether one feels, thinks, and behaves in an authentic way (Kifer et al. 2013).

Specifically, the present paper builds on social identity theory and investigates antecedents of follower's perceptions of leader authenticity. This theory argues that self-identifications influence consistency in attitudes and behaviors (Smith and Terry 2003; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Terry and Hogg 1996; Wellen et al. 1998). We focus on two fundamental self-identifications from the perspective of social identity theory – a leader's sense of belongingness and his/her sense of uniqueness – as antecedents of perceived leader authenticity (Banaji and Prentice 1994; Brewer and Gardner 1996; Hornsey and Jetten 2004; Hogg 2001; Hoyle et al. 1999; Postmes and Jetten 2006; Sedikides and Skowronski 1993). Based on the notion that consistency in attitudes and behaviors has important implications for interpersonal perceptions and interactions (Cross et al. 2003), we propose that leaders' sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness interact to influence followers' perceptions of leaders' self-concept consistency, which in turn influences their perceptions of leaders' authenticity. Specifically, we argue that when a leader feels a low sense of belongingness, there is a positive relationship between sense of uniqueness and perceptions of leader authenticity, whereas there is no such relationship when the leader feels a high sense of



belongingness. However, when a leader feels a high sense of belongingness, followers always perceive the leader as having consistent self-concept regardless of the sense of uniqueness level. Figure 1 visually represents our proposed model.

## **Leaders' Self-Identification and Perceived Leader Self-Concept Consistency**

Self-concept consistency refers to an individual's consistency between attitudes and behaviors (Block 1961; Boucher 2011; Cross et al. 2003; Donahue et al. 1993; Kraus et al. 2011; Sheldon et al. 1997). Social identity theory suggests that a person's self-identifications influence consistency in his or her attitudes and behaviors (Smith and Terry 2003; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Terry and Hogg 1996; Wellen et al. 1998). Specifically, self-identification refers to how individuals define themselves relative to other people and groups (Hogg 2001; Jackson and Johnson 2012; Lord et al. 2001; Pratt 1998; Uhl-Bien 2006; van Knippenberg et al. 2004). Schlenker (1985) characterizes self-identification as the process of "fixing and expressing one's own identity, privately through reflection about oneself and publicly through self-disclosures, self-presentations and other activities that serve to project one's identity to audiences" (p. 66). The personal self and the social self define a person's self-identity (Brewer and Gardner 1996). The personal self defines an individual's sense of uniqueness, which specifies how one differs from others in terms of one's unique characteristics, such as one's traits and attributes (Banaji and Prentice 1994). The social self defines an individual's sense of belongingness, which specifies the extent to which one sees oneself to be similar to and to belong to certain social groups (Hoyle et al. 1999; Hogg 2001). Importantly, previous research suggests that sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness are relatively orthogonal, meaning that people can define their identity based on one of four possible combinations: a high sense of uniqueness and a high sense of belongingness, a low sense of uniqueness and a low sense of belongingness, a high sense of uniqueness and a low sense of belongingness, a low sense of uniqueness and a high sense of belongingness

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(Jackson and Johnson 2012; Johnson and Saboe 2011; Kashima and Hardie 2000; Selenta and Lord 2005).

According to social identity theory, individuals have a personal identity. Individuals who feel that they are unique and different from others follow their individual norms. Because these individual norms are fully integrated into their sense of self, they have integrated regulation, which constitutes the autonomous form of external regulation. As a result, they are able to act in accordance with their feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and values and resist external influences (Ryan and Deci 2003; Peus et al. 2012). Indeed, previous studies have shown that individuals who pay attention to their own feelings and resist external influences are more likely to exhibit consistency between attitudes, traits, and behaviors (Koestner et al. 1992). On the other hand, social identity theory suggests that individuals who feel that they belong to social groups are more likely to identify with and follow group norms. As a result, they demonstrate consistency in their attitudes and behaviors (Smith and Terry 2003; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Terry and Hogg 1996; Wellen et al. 1998). Specifically, individuals with a high sense of belongingness assimilate to the group prototype. In this assimilation process, self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors converge on the group norms. Thus, a sense of belongingness prescribes attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with group norms. Indeed, previous studies have shown that students who feel a high sense of belongingness to a group that promotes health behaviors are more likely to engage in consistent behaviors (Terry and Hogg 1996).

Building on social identity theory, we argue that a leader's self-identification is likely to inform followers about whether that leader has a consistent self-concept. Given that people orthogonally define their identity based on the combination of two identifications, the effects of sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness should not be considered separately (Steffens et al. 2016). Thus, we argue that a leader's sense of uniqueness and sense of

belongingness should interact to influence followers' perceptions of a leader's self-concept consistency. Specifically, we hypothesize that when a leader feels a low sense of belongingness, his or her sense of uniqueness will be positively related to followers' perceived leader self-concept consistency. As noted above, a sense of uniqueness prescribes norms that are unique to a leader. When a leader feels a low sense of belongingness and a high sense of uniqueness, followers should perceive this leader as having a consistent self-concept. A leader who feels that he or she is unique and different from others follows individual norms. As a result, this leader has consistency in their own values, beliefs, and actions, and can resist external influences (Ryan and Deci 2003; Peus et al. 2012). When a leader feels a low sense of belongingness and a low sense of uniqueness, followers see him or her as having an inconsistent self-concept. This is because this leader lacks both individual norms and group norms to guide his or her behaviors. This makes it difficult for followers to see coherence in their leader. Thus, we expect a positive relationship between sense of uniqueness and perceived leader self-concept consistency when the leader has a low sense of belongingness.

On the other hand, we hypothesize that for leaders high in sense of belongingness, sense of uniqueness and perceived leader self-concept consistency will not be related. A sense of belongingness prescribes group norms to a leader. When a leader feels a high sense of belongingness and a high sense of uniqueness, followers should perceive this leader as having a consistent self-concept. A leader occupies a distinctive role in organizations and at the same time represents the collective interest (Kernis 2003; May et al. 2003; Spitzmuller and Ilies 2010; Tate 2008). Specifically, there are several strategies that people can utilize in order to achieve individual differentiation within a group and at the same time demonstrating group identification (i.e., optimal distinctiveness) such as identifying with a numerically distinct group, identifying with a subgroup, identifying with a group that defines itself against

the mainstream, or perceptually enhancing the distinctiveness of one's group. In other words, it is possible for people to have a high sense of belongingness and a high sense of uniqueness by identifying with more exclusive, relatively specific collectives (Ashforth et al. 2008; Hogg 2001; Hornsey and Jetten 2004). The unique role of leadership allows leaders to achieve both a high sense of belongingness and uniqueness (Brewer and Gardner 1996). Leaders can achieve this by identifying with a smaller entity (e.g., the collective they lead), but at the same time identifying themselves with the superordinate level (e.g., the organization) (Gonzalez and Brown 2006; Hornsey and Hogg 2000). This allows leaders to identify with the collective they lead but meanwhile reduces intergroup bias and prejudice (Gonzalez and Brown 2006; Hornsey and Hogg 2000). This optimal distinctiveness makes leaders act in accordance with this distinctive leadership role that requires both collective orientation and uniqueness (Brewer and Gardner 1996). Thus, followers should perceive self-concept consistency in these leaders. On the other hand, when a leader feels a high sense of belongingness and a low sense of uniqueness, followers are also likely to see this leader as having consistency. This is because this leader assimilates to the group prototype. His/her attitudes and behaviors converge on the group norms. Guided by group norms, this leader is able to exhibit consistent attitudes and behaviors (Hogg 2001). Thus, we expect that sense of uniqueness and perceived leader self-concept consistency will be not related when the leader has a high sense of belongingness. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1: A leader's sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness interact to influence follower perceptions of leader self-concept consistency. Specifically, when a leader feels a low sense of belongingness, there will be a positive relationship between sense of uniqueness and perceptions of leader self-concept consistency. When a leader feels a high sense of belongingness, there will be no relationship between sense of uniqueness and perceptions of leader self-concept consistency.*

## **Leaders' Self-Identification, Perceived Leader Self-Concept Consistency, and Perceived Leader Authenticity**

Self-concept consistency of an individual makes it easier for others to see that individual's authenticity (Boucher 2011; Cross et al. 2003; Peus et al. 2012; Shamir and Eilam 2005). Consistency in leaders' attitudes and behaviors engenders transparency and credibility in the eyes of followers. As a result, followers are more likely to see their leaders as being true to themselves (Moorman et al. 2013; Sparrowe 2005). Although there are no empirical studies examining the relationship between perceived self-concept consistency and perceived authenticity, theoretically, scholars have suggested that perceived self-concept consistency should influence perceived authenticity (Cross et al. 2003; Shamir and Eilam 2005; Walumbwa et al. 2008). For instance, Walumbwa et al. (2008) claim that in order to be perceived as being authentic, leaders need to demonstrate "consistency between their values, beliefs, and actions" (p. 93). Similarly, Shamir and Eilam (2005) point out that "development of self-knowledge and self-concept clarity, including clarity about values and convictions" is one of the key components of perceived leader authenticity (p. 399). Therefore, when followers perceive a leader as endorsing an incoherent self-concept, they are likely to perceive him or her as inauthentic.

The tripartite model of authenticity includes three aspects: self-alienation, authentic living, and external influence. Followers' perceptions of leader self-concept consistency are likely to influence how followers perceive these three aspects of authenticity of leaders. Through leaders' expressed attitudes and exhibited behaviors, followers can see whether the leader has a match between conscious awareness and their actual experience (i.e., self-alienation). Specifically, "the subjective experience of not knowing oneself, or feeling out of touch with the true self" is indicative of self-alienation (Wood et al. 2008; p. 386). The consistency in attitudes and behaviors informs followers that this leader knows his/herself

and is able to align the self with their experiences and behaviors. Perceptions of leader self-concept consistency also inform followers whether this leader is high in authentic living. Also, being true to oneself in most situations and living in accordance with one's values and beliefs are indicative of one's authentic living. Expressing attitudes and behaving consistently with these attitudes thus indicate that this leader has high authentic living. Finally, perceptions of leader self-concept consistency influence followers' perceptions of whether the leader can reject external influence. An inconsistency in the leader's attitudes and behaviors indicates that this leader does not have internalized norms to guide his/her behaviors. This leader's behaviors vary according to external influence. Building on this, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 2: Followers' perception of the leader's self-concept consistency is positively related to followers' perception of leader authenticity.*

As we argued above, leader's sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness interact to influence follower perception of this leader's self-concept consistency, and follower perception of leader's self-concept consistency, in turn, is positively related to followers' perception of leader authenticity, we further argue that leader's sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness interact to influence follower perception of leader authenticity. Specifically, when a leader has a low sense of belongingness, the relationship between sense of uniqueness and follower perceptions of leader authenticity will be positive. This is because followers see this leader as having self-concept consistency. When a leader has a high sense of belongingness, sense of uniqueness and follower perceptions of leader authenticity will not be related. That is, a leader with a high sense of belongingness will always be perceived as authentic whether he/she has a high or low sense of uniqueness because this leader will be perceived as having self-concept consistency<sup>1</sup>. Thus, we hypothesize that:

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<sup>1</sup> A high sense of belongingness is distinct from accepting external influence. As noted earlier, accepting external influence refers to believing one has to accept the influence from others and even conform to their expectations. Belongingness leads to norm internalization, which avoids such enforced influence from others.

*Hypothesis 3: Followers' perception of the leader's self-concept consistency mediates the interactive effect of a leader's sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness on follower perceptions of leader authenticity.*

## Overview of the Studies

We tested our hypotheses in two studies. Study 1 was a multisource field study conducted in China in which we collected responses from leader-follower dyads. Leaders rated the predictor variables - i.e., their sense of belongingness and uniqueness - based on instruments developed by Hoogervorst et al. (2012) and Simsek and Yalincetin (2010), respectively. Followers rated the criterion variable- i.e., leaders' authenticity – based on a well-validated authenticity scale (Wood et al. 2008). They also rated the mediating variable – perceived leader's self-concept consistency based on Campbell et al. (1996)'s scale.

We subsequently tested our hypotheses in a controlled laboratory study among business students from a medium-sized European university (Study 2). In this experiment, all the participants were assigned to the role of a follower. We orthogonally manipulated information about sense of belongingness and uniqueness of a leader and measured the followers' perceptions of leader authenticity.

## Study 1

### Method

**Participants and procedure.** One hundred and sixty leader-follower dyads took part in this study. We collected our data via a professional Chinese research agency. The research panel has ISO9001 certification, that is, it meets the qualitative ISO requirements for social scientific research, market research, or opinion polls. Prior research suggests that this and similar research panels (e.g., Study Response in the USA) are reliable methods for data collection (Hoogervorst et al. 2010; Judge et al. 2006). We restricted participation to individuals who, at the time of the survey, held a leadership position at work (i.e., supervising

at least one follower). The research agency invited 281 leaders. They completed a survey and were asked to indicate the name and the e-mail address of the last subordinate they talked to before working on the survey. In so doing, we removed the possibility that leaders would recall a subordinate with whom they have the best relationship, and we also ensured that choosing the focal subordinate would be random (Chun et al. 2009). The research agency then sent the follower an e-mail that directed the follower to an online link to the survey questions. We received complete responses from 160 leader-follower dyads.

For the leaders, 60.6% were male, and the average age was 35.39 years ( $SD = 4.81$ ). For the followers, 52.5 % were male, and the average age was 30.11 years ( $SD = 3.35$ ). Average leader-follower tenure was 4.43 years ( $SD = 2.03$ ). The respondents worked in various sectors, with industrial products (26.9%), technology/telecommunications (25%), and financial services (18.8%) being the most common.

**Measures.** Unless noted differently, we used 5-point response scales (1 = *totally disagree*, to 5 = *totally agree*). To ensure translation equivalence, two bilingual researchers separately translated the items from English to Chinese and then back to English. Comparisons showed no discrepancies in the meaning of the items.

**Leaders' sense of belongingness.** We measured leaders' sense of belongingness using a 4-item sense of belongingness scale developed by Hoogervorst et al. 2012. The original scale measures an individual's sense of belongingness in the team. We adapted the scale to reflect a leader's sense of belongingness in the organization. These items asked to what extent the participants felt "accepted" by employees, "connected to" employees, "a part of" the organization, and "incorporated" in the organization. We averaged the items' scores and achieved a reliable index ( $\alpha = .73$ ).

**Leaders' sense of uniqueness.** To assess leaders' sense of uniqueness, we used a 5-item scale based on Simsek and Yalincetin (2010)'s sense of uniqueness scale. The original



scale consists of five items and measures an individual's sense of uniqueness in general. We adapted the scale to reflect a leader's sense of uniqueness in the organization. The five items were: "As employees get to know me more, they begin to recognize my special features." "I feel unique in the organization." "I feel that I have many special characteristics that distinguish me from other employees." "I feel that some of my characteristics are completely unique to me." and "I think that the characteristics that make me up are different from other employees." We combined the items into a reliable index ( $\alpha = .70$ ).

***Perceived leader's self-concept consistency.*** Followers rated their perceived leader's self-concept consistency using six items adapted from Campbell et al. (1996)'s self-concept clarity scale. We adapted these items based on the definition of self-concept consistency, which refers to an individual's consistency between attitudes and behaviors (Block 1961; Boucher 2011; Cross et al. 2003; Donahue et al. 1993; Kraus et al. 2011; Sheldon et al. 1997). Specifically, the original scale has 12 items and measures how individuals perceive themselves. Items such as "I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am" and "Even if I wanted to, I don't think I would tell someone what I'm really like." are not applicable in the interpersonal perception context as it would be difficult for subordinates to see how their leaders feel internally. We therefore selected the six items that describe states that are observable for followers and reflect the consistency between attitudes and behaviors: "This leader's beliefs about him/herself often conflict with one another." "On one day this leader might have one opinion of him/herself and on another day he/she might have a different opinion." "This leader is not sure what he/she is really like." "This leader's description of his/her personality is different from one day to another day." "It is often hard for this leader to make up his/her mind about things because he/she seems not really know what he/she wants." and "In general, this leader has a clear sense of who he/she is and what he/she is." We reversed the first five of these six items and combined them into a reliable

perceived leader self-concept-consistency scale ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

***Perceived leader authenticity.*** We asked followers to rate their respective leader's authenticity using the 12-item authenticity scale developed by Wood et al. (2008). Given that the original scale measures respondents' perception of self-authenticity, we slightly adapted the items so that they reflected the followers' perception of their leaders' authenticity. Sample items were: "My supervisor is true to himself in most situations" and "My supervisor is strongly influenced by the opinions of others" (reverse coded). The scale has 3 subscales: self-alienation ( $\alpha = .84$ ), authentic living ( $\alpha = .70$ ), and accepting external influence ( $\alpha = .80$ ). The overall scale of authenticity also has good reliability ( $\alpha = .77$ ).

## Analysis and Results

***Confirmatory factor analyses.*** To be perceived as being authentic, one must have a high level of authentic living, a low level of acceptance of external influence, and a low level of self-alienation (Wood et al. 2008). Wood et al. (2008) reported in confirmatory factor analyses that the three subscales of authenticity assess three distinct, but interrelated dimensions, whose interrelationships can be explained by a single second-order general authenticity factor. Thus, we first conducted Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs) to confirm whether perceived authenticity is such a construct. To do so, we compared one-factor model of perceived authenticity, three-factor model that treats three subscales of perceived authenticity as uncorrelated dimensions (i.e., three-factor orthogonal model), and three-factor model that treats three subscales of perceived authenticity as correlated dimensions (i.e., three-factor correlated model). Considering the power issue in relatively small samples, we adopted item parceling strategy to reduce the number of parameter estimates in CFA models (Little et al. 2002). In the three-factor models, twelve items were parceled into six indicators, with two indicators capturing a distinct dimension. In the one-factor model of perceived authenticity, items were parceled into six indicators. We referred to the classic goodness of fit

indexes –  $\chi^2$ ,  $df$ , CFI, TFL, RMSEA, SRMR to determine the fit of each CFA model (Brannick 1995; Chen 2007; Meade et al. 2008), and examined the changes of  $\chi^2$ , CFI, and RMSEA to compare different CFA models for the best fit (Barrett 2007; Schreiber et al. 2006). CFAs showed that the three-factor correlated model had good fit ( $\chi^2 = 2.47$ ,  $df = 6$ ; CFI=1.00, TLI=1.03; RMSEA = .01, SRMR = .02)<sup>2</sup>, while the one-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 118.86$ ,  $df = 9$ ; CFI = .64, TLI=.40; RMSEA = .28, SRMR = .15) and the three-factor orthogonal model showed unacceptable fit ( $\chi^2 = 58.10$ ,  $df = 9$ ; CFI = .84, TLI=.73; RMSEA = .19, SRMR = .17). The three-factor correlated model also fits the data significantly better than the one-factor model,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 116.39$ ,  $\Delta CFI = .36$ ,  $\Delta RMSEA = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ , and the three-factor orthogonal model,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 55.62$ ,  $\Delta CFI = .16$ ,  $\Delta RMSEA = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ . Furthermore, the three-factor orthogonal model was not significantly better than the one-factor model,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 60.76$ ,  $\Delta CFI = .20$ ,  $\Delta RMSEA = .09$ . Consistent with Wood et al (2008)'s results of CFAs, our results suggest that perceived authenticity is a construct that is reflected in three lower-order, correlated factors. Thus, we conducted hypotheses tests for the overall perceived authenticity score and for the three sub-dimensions of perceived authenticity.

We then conducted CFAs to determine whether perceived self-concept consistency and perceived leader authenticity reported by subordinates represent distinct constructs (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Bandalos and Finney 2001). Items of perceived self-concept consistency were randomly parceled into two indicators. Items of perceived authenticity were parceled into three indicators, with each capturing a distinct dimension. CFAs showed that the two-factor model had good fit ( $\chi^2 = 17.77$ ,  $df = 4$ ; CFI = .95, TLI=.87; RMSEA = .15, SRMR = .05), while the one-factor model showed unacceptable fit ( $\chi^2 = 28.26$ ,  $df = 5$ ; CFI = .91, TLI=.82; RMSEA = .17, SRMR = .06). The two-factor model also fits the data significantly better than the one-factor model,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 10.82$ ,  $\Delta CFI = .04$ ,  $\Delta RMSEA = .02$ ,  $p$

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that CFI = 1.00 does not indicate perfect, but excellent fit (when  $df > 1$ ). These fit values result when  $\chi^2 < df$  (Bentler 1990).

< .001. This suggests that perceived self-concept consistency and perceived leader authenticity with self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence as sub-dimensions represent distinct constructs.

We also conducted CFAs to determine whether sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness reported by leaders represent accurately distinct constructs. Items of each construct (i.e., sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness) were randomly parceled into two indicators. CFAs showed that the two-factor model had good fit ( $\chi^2 = .02$ ,  $df = 1$ ; CFI = 1.00, TLI=1.03; RMSEA = .01, SRMR = .01), while the one-factor model showed unacceptable fit ( $\chi^2 = 31.91$ ,  $df = 2$ ; CFI = .83, TLI=.50; RMSEA = .31, SRMR = .11). The two-factor model also fits the data significantly better than the one-factor model,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 31.89$ ,  $\Delta CFI = .18$ ,  $\Delta RMSEA = .03$ ,  $p < .001$ . This suggests that sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness represent distinct constructs.

**Results.** Table 1 shows the correlations between the study variables. Data analysis followed procedures used in previous studies (e.g., Hoyt and Burnette 2013). We hypothesize that when a leader feels a low sense of belongingness, there will be a positive relationship between sense of uniqueness and follower perceptions of leader self-concept consistency. When a leader feels a high sense of belongingness, there will be no such relationship (Hypothesis 1). To test this hypothesis, we first conducted hierarchical regression analyses. In step 1, the followers' perceptions of leader self-concept consistency was regressed on leaders' sense of belongingness and sense of uniqueness. In step 2, we entered the interaction of leaders' sense of belongingness and sense of uniqueness. We centered the predictor variables before calculating the interaction term (Aiken and West 1991). Table 2 shows the results of the regression analysis with perceived self-concept consistency as the criterion.

In support of Hypothesis 1, the results revealed a significant two-way interaction

between sense of belongingness and sense of uniqueness of leaders (see Figure 2)<sup>3</sup>. Simple slopes analyses revealed that when leaders' sense of belongingness was low (1 *SD* below the mean), leaders' sense of uniqueness was positively related to followers' perceptions of leaders' self-concept consistency ( $\beta = .22, t(156) = 2.89, p < .01$ ). When leaders' sense of belongingness was high (1 *SD* above the mean), the relationship between leaders' sense of uniqueness and perceived leaders' self-concept consistency was not significant ( $\beta = -.05, t(156) = -.80, p = .43$ ). From a different vantage point, simple slopes analyses showed that when leaders' sense of uniqueness was low (1 *SD* below the mean), leaders' sense of belongingness was positively related to follower perceptions of leaders' self-concept consistency ( $\beta = .16, t(156) = 2.51, p = .01$ ). When leaders' sense of uniqueness was high (1 *SD* above the mean), leaders' sense of belongingness was not related to perceived leaders' self-concept consistency ( $\beta = -.12, t(156) = -1.26, p = .21$ ). Thus, results support Hypothesis 1 by showing that when a leader's sense of belongingness was low, the relationship between the leader's sense of uniqueness and perceived leader self-concept consistency was positive, whereas this relationship was not significant when the leader had a high sense of belongingness<sup>4</sup>.

We also hypothesized that followers' perception of leader self-concept consistency is positively related to their perception of leader authenticity (Hypothesis 2). We tested Hypothesis 2 with hierarchical regression analyses. The results revealed that followers' perception of leader self-concept consistency was significantly related to their perception of leader authenticity ( $\beta = .76, t(158) = 14.76, p < .01$ ). Furthermore, followers' perception of

<sup>3</sup>Although the figure suggests a pattern that a high sense of uniqueness and belongingness lead to a lower level of perceptions of leaders' self-concept consistency, simple slope analyses revealed that perceptions of leaders' self-concept consistency was not significantly different from those of leaders with a high sense of uniqueness and a low sense of belongingness, and those with a low sense of uniqueness and a high sense of belongingness.

<sup>4</sup>We also used the Johnson–Neyman technique (Johnson and Neyman 1936) to investigate the nature of the simple slopes in more detail. The relationship between uniqueness and self-consistency was significant and positive at values on belongingness  $< 3.99$ ; at values  $\geq 3.99$  on belongingness, there was no significant relationship between uniqueness and self-consistency. This further supports hypothesis 1.

leader self-concept consistency was significantly related to their perceptions of leader authentic living ( $\beta = .19, t(158) = 2.45, p = .02$ ), perceived external influence (reverse coded) ( $\beta = .61, t(158) = 9.75, p < .001$ ), perceived self-alienation (reverse coded) ( $\beta = .68, t(158) = 11.60, p < .001$ ). Thus, the results support Hypothesis 2 by showing that there was a positive relationship between followers' perception of leader self-concept consistency and their perception of leader authenticity.

We hypothesized that perceived leader self-concept consistency mediates the interactive effect of sense of belongingness and uniqueness on perceived leader authenticity (Hypothesis 3). To test for the moderated mediation model, scholars recommend directly testing the significance of the mediated effect, conditional upon the moderator (e.g., Edwards and Lambert 2007; Hayes 2013; Preacher and Hayes 2008). Accordingly, we used Hayes' PROCESS macro to test for moderated mediation (model 8, 5,000 bootstrap resamples). PROCESS calculated bootstrap confidence intervals (CIs) for the indirect effect of leaders' sense of uniqueness (low vs. high) on followers' perceived authenticity via perceived self-concept consistency of leaders, conditional upon leaders' sense of belongingness (low vs. high). It also calculates bootstrap confidence intervals (CIs) for the indirect effect of leaders' sense of belongingness (low vs. high) on followers' perceived authenticity via perceived self-concept consistency of leaders, conditional upon leaders' sense of uniqueness (low vs. high). As shown in Table 3, leader's sense of uniqueness positively predicted perceived leader authenticity via perceived leader self-concept consistency at a low level of leaders' sense of belongingness (belongingness = -1 *SD*, indirect effect = 0.11, *SE* = 0.04, 95% CI: [0.03, 0.20]), but not at a high level of leaders' sense of belongingness (belongingness = +1 *SD*, indirect effect = -0.03, *SE* = .04, 95% CI: [-0.11, 0.06]). Similarly, leaders' sense of belongingness positively predicted perceived leader authenticity via perceived leader self-concept consistency at a low level of leaders' sense of uniqueness (uniqueness = -1 *SD*,

indirect effect = 0.08,  $SE = .03$ , 95% CI: [0.02, 0.14]), but not at a high level of leaders' sense of uniqueness (uniqueness = +1  $SD$ , indirect effect = -0.06,  $SE = 0.06$ , 95% CI: [-0.17, 0.05])<sup>5</sup>.

Consistent with Wood et al (2008) and results of our CFAs, we also present results for the three dimensions. Leader's sense of uniqueness positively predicted perceived leader authentic living (indirect effect = .03,  $SE = .02$ , 95% CI: [.01, .08]), perceived external influence (reverse coded) (indirect effect = .16,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI: [.05, .30]), and perceived self-alienation (reverse coded) (indirect effect = .14,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI: [.05, .27]) via perceived leader self-concept consistency at a low level of leaders' sense of belongingness (1  $SD$  below the mean), but not at a high level of leaders' sense of belongingness (1  $SD$  above the mean) (indirect effect on perceived authentic living = -.01,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI: [-.04, .01]), (indirect effect on perceived external influence = -.04,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI: [-.16, .08]), (indirect effect on perceived self-alienation = -.04,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI: [-.14, .07]). Similarly, leaders' sense of belongingness positively predicted the three dimensions via perceived leader self-concept consistency at a low level of leaders' sense of uniqueness (1  $SD$  below the mean) (indirect effect = .02,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI: [.004, .07]), (indirect effect = .12,  $SE = .04$ , 95% CI: [.03, .20]), and (indirect effect = .10,  $SE = .04$ , 95% CI: [.03, .18]), but not at a high level of leaders' sense of uniqueness (1  $SD$  above the mean) (indirect effect = -.02,  $SE = .02$ , 95% CI: [-.07, .01]), (indirect effect = -.09,  $SE = .08$ , 95% CI: [-.25, .07]), and (indirect effect = -.08,  $SE = .07$ , 95% CI: [-.23, .06]).

In sum, based on responses from leaders and followers, Study 1 showed that a leader's

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<sup>5</sup> If perceptions of leader self-concept consistency mediates the interaction between leaders' sense of belongingness and leaders' sense of uniqueness on perceptions of leader authenticity, this suggests that the Leaders' Sense of Belongingness  $\times$  Leaders' Sense of Uniqueness interaction significantly predicts perceptions of leader authenticity when perceptions of leader self-concept consistency are not added as a predictor in the equation (Shrout & Bolger 2002). OLS regression in which we regressed perceptions of leader authenticity on the main and interactive effects of leaders' sense of belongingness and leaders' sense of uniqueness revealed a significant Leaders' Sense of Belongingness  $\times$  Leaders' Sense of Uniqueness interaction ( $\beta = -.06$ ,  $t(156) = -2.06$ ,  $p = .04$ ). The shape of this interaction was such that leaders' sense of uniqueness positively predicted perceptions of leader authenticity when leaders' sense of belongingness was low,  $\beta = .18$ ,  $t(156) = 3.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ; leaders' sense of uniqueness did not predict perceptions of leader authenticity when leaders' sense of belongingness was high ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $t(156) = 1.18$ ,  $p = .24$ ).

sense of belongingness and uniqueness interact to predict followers' perception of leader authenticity via their perception of leader self-concept consistency. Specifically, when leaders' sense of belongingness was low, leaders' sense of uniqueness positively predicted perceived leader authenticity via perceived leader self-concept consistency at a low level of leaders' sense of belongingness.

Although the findings of Study 1 are high in ecological validity, they do not allow drawing causal conclusions. Furthermore, although we asked the leaders to randomly select one of their followers, it is possible that the leaders selected those with whom they have a close relationship. Relationship closeness may contribute to followers' perceptions of leader authenticity. To control for other explanations and establish causality, we conducted Study 2, which is a laboratory experiment in a leadership context.

## Study 2

### Method

**Participants and design.** One hundred and two business school students from a medium-sized university in the Netherlands (40.2% male), with an average age of 22.01 years ( $SD = 2.30$ ) participated in the study in exchange for five euros. The participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions of a 2 (leaders' sense of belongingness: low vs. high)  $\times$  2 (leaders' sense of uniqueness: low vs. high) between-participants design.

**Procedure.** Upon arrival in the laboratory, each participant was seated in a soundproof cubicle, and all instructions were communicated via a personal computer. The participants were instructed that they would participate in a workplace simulation exercise that involved a team task. They were asked to imagine that they worked in an organization and were told that only half of them would be randomly selected to be a subordinate and work with a leader on this task. In reality, all the participants were assigned to the subordinate role, and they never proceeded to the actual team task. After the role assignment, we



instructed the participants that before the team task would start, they would receive background information about their leader's interpersonal skills that could help them interact with the leader in the upcoming team task. To simulate actual workplace experiences, the participants were asked to listen to an audio clip from a male confederate who acted as the leader. In the audio clip, the ostensible leader narrated feelings of belongingness and uniqueness. This audio clip was used to manipulate leaders' sense of belongingness and uniqueness (see Bongiorno et al. 2014; Naidoo and Lord 2008; Stam et al. 2010 for similar procedures). To be consistent with Study 1, we wrote the script based on the 4-item sense of belongingness scale and the 5-item sense of uniqueness scale used in Study 1. We also referred to the definitions of sense of belongingness and uniqueness (Banaji and Prentice 1994; Brewer and Gardner 1996; Hornsey and Jetten 2004; Hogg 2001; Hoyle et al. 1999; Postmes and Jetten 2006; Sedikides and Skowronski 1993). The script for the high (low) leaders' sense of belongingness conditions was:

*"In my previous experiences of teamwork, working with my subordinates is normally more (less) comfortable than working alone. I usually (do not) feel connected with my subordinates. I am (not) part of them. I am (not) incorporated in the whole group."*

The script for the high (low) leaders' sense of uniqueness conditions was:

*"As a person, I am (not) different from my subordinates. If my team members get to know me more, they will recognize my unique features (I am not different). I do not (I) look much like my subordinates. I do (do not) have different views on many things from my subordinates."*

After the participants listened to the audio clip, they responded to a short questionnaire that included manipulation checks, demographic questions, the perceived leaders' self-concept-consistency scale, and the perceived leader-authenticity scale. The participants were then informed that they were not selected for the team task, and they were

allowed to leave the cubicles. After the experimenter debriefed the study purpose, each participant was paid 5 euros.

**Measures.** Unless noted otherwise, we used 7-point response scales (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *completely*). The participants answered two manipulation check questions. Specifically, they rated the leader's sense of belongingness: "This leader felt part of the group with the subordinates" (Hoogervorst et al. 2012) and the leader's sense of uniqueness: "This leader felt that he is different from his subordinates" (Simsek and Yalincetin 2010).

Before the participants proceeded to the perceived leader-authenticity measure, we measured the proposed mediator: perceptions of leader's self-concept consistency. Given that participants had no prior interactions with the ostensible leader, it would be difficult for them to rate leader self-concept consistency based on the same scale used in Study 1 (Campbell et al. 1996). For example, it would not be meaningful to ask them to rate "This leader's description of his/her personality is different from one day to another day." Thus, we developed a 3-item scale based on the definition of self-concept consistency (Block 1961; Boucher 2011; Cross et al. 2003; Donahue et al. 1993; Kraus et al. 2011; Sheldon et al. 1997). The three items were: "This leader presented himself consistently," "This leader expressed conflicted values and statements (reverse coded)," and "This leader differs across contexts (reverse coded)." These items were combined into a reliable perceived leader self-concept-consistency scale ( $\alpha = .70$ ).

For the same reason, it would be difficult for them to rate leader authenticity based on the same scale used in Study 1 (Wood et al. 2008). For example, it would not be meaningful to ask them to rate "My supervisor is true to himself in most situations". Thus, we used nine items from two authenticity scales: Kraus et al.'s (2011) four-item interaction authenticity scale and Sheldon et al.'s (1997) five-item role authenticity scale. In the current experimental context, these items can better measure followers' perceptions of a leader's authenticity in

interpersonal interactions. We adjusted the items such that they reflected the followers' view about their leader's authenticity. Sample items are: "I feel like this leader can be himself with others," "I feel like this leader can easily express his true attitudes and feelings during interactions with others," "This leader has freely chosen this way of being," and "This leader is only this way because he has to be" (reversed). These items were combined into a reliable perceived leader-authenticity index ( $\alpha = .70$ ).

## Results

**Manipulation checks.** To check if the manipulation of leaders' sense of belongingness was successful, we conducted a 2 (leaders' sense of belongingness: low vs. high)  $\times$  2 (leaders' sense of uniqueness: low vs. high) ANOVA on the leaders' sense of belongingness manipulation check. This analysis revealed a significant main effect of leaders' sense of belongingness ( $F(1,98) = 224.66, p < .001, \eta^2 = .70$ ). Compared to participants in the low leaders'-sense-of-belongingness condition ( $M = 1.76, SD = 1.41$ ), participants in the high leaders'-sense-of-belongingness condition perceived their leaders as having a higher sense of belongingness ( $M = 5.92, SD = 1.38$ ). The effect of leaders' sense of uniqueness ( $F(1,98) = .09, p = .77, \eta^2 = .001$ ) and the interaction between leaders' sense of belongingness and uniqueness were not significant ( $F(1,98) = 1.23, p = .27, \eta^2 = .01$ ).

We further conducted a 2 (leaders' sense of belongingness: low vs. high)  $\times$  2 (leaders' sense of uniqueness: low vs. high) ANOVA on the leaders' sense of uniqueness manipulation check. This analysis revealed a significant main effect of leaders' sense of uniqueness ( $F(1,98) = 212.37.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = .68$ ). Compared to participants in the low leaders' sense of uniqueness condition ( $M = 2.12, SD = 1.31$ ), participants in the high leaders' sense of uniqueness condition perceived their leaders as having a higher sense of uniqueness ( $M = 5.82, SD = 1.24$ ). The effect of leaders' sense of belongingness ( $F(1,98) = .13, p = .72, \eta^2 = .001$ ) and the interaction between leaders' sense of belongingness and uniqueness were not

significant ( $F(1,98) = .48, p = .49, \eta^2 = .01$ ).

**Hypotheses tests.** We first conducted a 2 (leaders' sense of belongingness: low vs. high)  $\times$  2 (leaders' sense of uniqueness: low vs. high) ANOVA with the perceived self-concept consistency of leaders as the dependent variable. This analysis revealed a significant two-way interaction ( $F(1, 98) = 14.88, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$ ; see Figure 3). The main effect of leaders' sense of belongingness ( $F(1, 98) = 7.67, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$ ) was also significant. The main effect of leaders' sense of uniqueness was not significant ( $F(1, 98) = .15, p = .70, \eta^2 = .001$ ).

Simple effects analyses showed that when leaders' sense of belongingness was low, the level of perceived self-concept consistency was significantly higher when leaders have a high sense of uniqueness ( $M = 4.47, SD = 1.20$ ) than when leaders have a low sense of uniqueness ( $M = 3.45, SD = 1.22; F(1, 98) = 8.98, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$ ). Unexpectedly, when leaders' sense of belongingness was high, leaders' high sense of uniqueness led to a lower level of perceived self-concept consistency ( $M = 4.21, SD = 1.36$ ) than leaders' low sense of uniqueness did ( $M = 5.04, SD = 1.05; F(1, 98) = 6.04, p = .02, \eta^2 = .06$ ). We return to this finding in the discussion section. From a different vantage point, when leaders' sense of uniqueness was low, leaders' high sense of belongingness led to a significantly higher level of perceived self-concept consistency ( $M = 5.04, SD = 1.05$ ) than leaders' low sense of belongingness did ( $M = 3.45, SD = 1.22; F(1, 98) = 21.95, p < .001, \eta^2 = .18$ ). When leaders' sense of uniqueness was high, leaders' high sense of belongingness did not lead to a significantly higher level of perceived self-concept consistency ( $M = 4.21, SD = 1.36$ ) than leaders' low sense of belongingness did ( $M = 4.47, SD = 1.20; F(1, 98) = .59, p = .44, \eta^2 = .01$ ). Thus, results partially support Hypothesis 1.

We proceeded with testing Hypothesis 2. To estimate an unbiased effect of perceived self-concept consistency on perceived leader authenticity in the current experiment, we used

two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression using the IVREGRESS command in STATA in which we treated leaders' sense of uniqueness and leaders' high sense of belongingness as instrumental variables<sup>6</sup>. This analysis showed, first, that the error terms were correlated (Durbin  $Chi^2(1) = 9.20, p = 0.002$ ; Wu-Hausman  $F(1, 99) = 9.82, p = 0.002$ ). This implies that 2SLS regression is warranted. The analysis further showed that the effect of self-concept consistency perceptions on authenticity perceptions was significant ( $b = .57, se = .15, z = 3.70, p < .001$ ). The overidentification statistic was not significant (Sargan  $Chi^2(2) = 4.98, p = 0.08$ ; Basmann  $Chi^2(2) = 5.03, p = 0.08$ ). This implies that any effect of leader's sense of uniqueness, leader's sense of belongingness, or the interaction on perceived leader authenticity goes through perceived self-concept consistency. Finally, there was no evidence that our instrumental variables were too weak to produce an unbiased estimate of the effect of perceived self-concept consistency on perceived leader authenticity (Anderson-Rubin Wald test  $Chi^2(3) = 29.31, p < 0.001$  see Antonakis et al. 2014, for of how to use 2SLS regression when error terms are correlated). Thus, the result supports Hypothesis 2.

As in Study 1, we examined Hypothesis 3 with Model 8 in Hayes's (2012) PROCESS macro for SPSS. We also used the bias-corrected bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples to construct confidence intervals for indirect effects (see Table 3). Leader's sense of uniqueness positively predicted perceived leader authenticity via perceived leader self-concept consistency at a low level of leaders' sense of belongingness (belongingness = 0, indirect effect = 0.13,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI: [0.02, 0.33]). Unexpectedly, leader's sense of

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<sup>6</sup> Given that perceived leader self-concept consistency and perceived leader authenticity were collected simultaneously from the same source, to establish in an unbiased way if the proposed moderated mediation model holds, the error term in the equation used to establish the interaction effect on the mediator should be uncorrelated with the error term in the equation used to establish the effect of mediator on the dependent variable (Shaver 2005). Correlated error terms are possible in the present study for various reasons. First, perceived self-concept consistency and perceived leader authenticity were both indexed by the same respondent leading to potential common method bias. Second, the causal direction between perceived self-concept consistency and perceived leader authenticity may be bidirectional. Third, in addition to being influenced by the independent variables in our study, perceived self-concept consistency and perceived leader authenticity may both be influenced by unmeasured variables, such as the leader's life storytelling and the leader-follower's value congruence (Weischer et al. 2013; Williams et al. 2012). Therefore, we used the recommended 2SLS approach.

uniqueness negatively predicted perceived leader authenticity via perceived leader self-concept consistency at a high level of leaders' sense of belongingness (belongingness = 1, indirect effect = -0.11,  $SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI: [-0.30, -0.01]). We return to this finding in the discussion section<sup>7</sup>. The mediating effect of leader's self-concept consistency is only significant at the low level of leaders' sense of uniqueness (uniqueness = "0", indirect effect = 0.21,  $SE = 0.10$ , 95% CI: [0.03, 0.44]), but not at the high level of leaders' sense of uniqueness (uniqueness = "1", indirect effect = -0.04,  $SE = 0.06$ , 95% CI: [-0.20, 0.04]). These results support our moderated mediation model<sup>8</sup>.

### General Discussion

Our research shows that a leader's sense of belongingness interacts with his/her sense of uniqueness to influence followers' perceptions of the leader's authenticity. Specifically, we find that when the leader has a low sense of belongingness, having a high (vs. low) sense of uniqueness leads to higher interpersonal perceptions of authenticity. Similarly, when the leader has a low sense of uniqueness, having a high (vs. low) sense of belongingness leads to higher interpersonal perceptions of authenticity. This is because followers see this leader as having high self-concept consistency. These conclusions were supported by a survey conducted among leader-follower dyads working in a variety of different organizations

<sup>7</sup> Consistent with Study 1, we found a significant Leaders' Sense of Belongingness  $\times$  Leaders' Sense of Uniqueness interaction effect on perceptions of leader authenticity ( $F(1, 98) = 4.93, p = .03, \eta^2 = .04$ ). The shape of this interaction was such that when sense of belongingness was low, leaders' high sense of uniqueness led to a significantly higher level of perceived authenticity ( $M = 4.31, SD = .66$ ) than leaders' low sense of uniqueness did ( $M = 3.72, SD = .65; F(1, 98) = 8.19, p < .01, \eta^2 = .08$ ). When leaders' sense of belongingness was high, leaders' high sense of uniqueness did not lead to a higher level of perceived authenticity ( $M = 4.63, SD = .85$ ) than that of leaders' low sense of uniqueness ( $M = 4.69, SD = .76; F(1, 98) = .08, p = .78, \eta^2 = .001$ ). Thus, the negative indirect effect we found was not replicated in the direct effect of the interaction on perceptions of leader authenticity.

<sup>8</sup> To test the indirect effect of the leader's sense of uniqueness  $\times$  leader's sense of belongingness (and the two main effects) on perceived leader authenticity, via the consistently estimated effect of perceived self-concept consistency on perceived leader authenticity (see the 2SLS analyses in the text), we used the NLCOM command in STATA. This analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of leader's sense of uniqueness ( $b = .62, se = .17, z = 3.56, p < .001$ ), of leader's sense of belongingness ( $b = 1.01, se = .20, z = 5.18, p < .001$ ), and, most importantly, of the leader's sense of uniqueness  $\times$  leader's sense of belongingness interaction ( $b = -.90, se = .24, z = -3.75, p < .001$ ). In sum, these analyses support the conclusions drawn from the PROCESS analyses presented in the text.

(Study 1) and a controlled laboratory experiment among business school students in a managerial simulation task (Study 2).

We also argued that when the leader has a high sense of belongingness, sense of uniqueness is not related to perceptions of self-concept consistency and perceptions of authenticity. This was supported in Study 1. Study 2 also supported this argument by showing that when leaders' sense of belongingness was high, leaders' high sense of uniqueness did not lead to a higher level of perceived authenticity than that of leaders' low sense of uniqueness. However, Study 2 revealed one finding that was inconsistent with our predictions and with study 1: a high sense of uniqueness may undermine perceived self-concept consistency when a leader also has a high sense of belongingness. It has been argued before that when individuals have both a high sense of uniqueness and a high sense of belongingness, they may experience conflict between individual norms and collective norms (Hornsey & Jetten 2004). It is challenging for them to pursue group norms without ignoring their personal identity. As a result, they may be perceived as having an inconsistent self-concept. Indeed, previous studies have shown that submerging the self to fulfill group norms can be perceived to be an obstacle to personal growth and a symptom of weakness (Baumeister 1991; Wallach and Wallach 1983). Although the effect we found in Study 2 is in line with these arguments, we are hesitant to interpret it given that it did not emerge in Study 1. Importantly, we found consistent results in two studies showing, first, that having a high (vs. low) sense of uniqueness heightens perceptions of authenticity via perceptions of self-concept consistency, but only when the leader has at the same time a low (vs. high) sense of belongingness. Second, having a high (vs. low) sense of belongingness heightens perceptions of authenticity via perceptions of self-concept consistency, but only when the leader has at the same time a low (vs. high) sense of uniqueness.

## Implications

First of all, our findings contribute to the authenticity literature by taking an interpersonal perspective to study perceptions of leader authenticity. To date, the majority of studies have relied on self-reported authenticity and examined antecedents of felt authenticity (English 2009; Goldman and Kernis 2002; Heppner et al. 2008; Koole and Kuhl 2003; Kraus et al. 2011; Lenton et al. 2013; 2016; Schlegel et al. 2009; Slabu et al. 2014; Turner and Billings, 1991). In order for authenticity to exert its interpersonal influences, one's interaction partner needs to perceive and feel this person's authenticity. Although scholars have called for studies that take an interpersonal perspective to study what determines perceptions of authenticity (Wickham 2013; Kokkoris and Kuhnen 2014), to the best of our knowledge, there are no studies examining the antecedents of interpersonal perceptions of authenticity. Our research contributes to this interpersonal aspect of authenticity by revealing that two important self-identifications – sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness – determine interpersonal perceptions of authenticity.

We also contribute to the authenticity literature by showing that having a high (vs. low) sense of uniqueness leads to higher interpersonal perceptions of authenticity only when the leader has at the same time a low (rather than high) sense of belongingness. Similarly, having a high (vs. low) sense of belongingness leads to higher interpersonal perceptions of authenticity only when the leader has at the same time a low (rather than high) sense of uniqueness. Given that self-identifications are fundamental to the self, it has been suggested theoretically that they influence perceived authenticity (Peus et al. 2012; Steffens et al. 2016). However, scholars have conflicting views about the influence of these two identifications. Some scholars suggest that authenticity derives from endorsing a true self that is commonly understood to be one's personal self (Ladkin and Taylor 2010; Shamir and Eilam 2005; Sparrowe 2005; Waite et al. 2014). Other scholars suggest that a person who privileges a social self over a personal self is more likely to be perceived as authentic (Ellemers 2012;



Gardner et al. 2005; Haslam 2004). Our findings reconcile and echo Steffens et al. (2016) who suggest, "The independent and interactive influence of these two forms of self-knowledge would seem to be an important focus for future research" (p.15). Our findings suggest that as long as one has a salient identification, whether it is the personal self or social self, one is perceived as authentic in interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, we contribute to the leadership literature by taking a more realistic view of leader authenticity. As Ford and Harding (2011) criticized, "the authentic leadership model refuses to acknowledge the imperfections of individuals and despite its attestations to seeking 'one's true, or core self', it privileges a collective (organizational) self over an individual self and thereby hampers subjectivity to both leaders and followers." (p. 463). By taking the follower's perspective, we reveal that it is not necessary for followers to see a "perfect" leader who promotes collective interests. They base their authenticity perceptions on perceived consistency in the leader's self-concept. Such self-concept consistency derives from having salient self-identifications that guide one's attitudes and behaviors: a high sense of uniqueness and/or a high sense of belongingness.

Scholars have repeatedly suggested that self-concept consistency is an important antecedent of perceived authenticity (Boucher 2011; Kraus et al. 2011; Shamir and Eilam 2005). However, to date, no study has examined the relationship between self-concept consistency and perceived authenticity. Building on social identity theory, our research demonstrates what determines this important mechanism. Specifically, we showed that a leader's sense of belongingness and uniqueness are two important antecedents of perceived self-concept consistency. Thus, our research highlights the observation that a leader's self-concept consistency is manifested by two fundamental variables that define a leader's self-identity.

Our findings have important practical implications for organizations and leaders to cultivate authentic leaders in the workplace. Previous research has shown that perceived authenticity leads to beneficial interpersonal outcomes such as trust and relationship satisfaction (Wickham 2013). Thus, to gain followers' trust and satisfaction, it is important that a leader is perceived as authentic by followers. First, building on our findings, organizations could select leaders with certain combinations of self-identifications that potentially lead to perceived self-concept consistency. However, while organizations do so, they should be cautious that leaders may intentionally "fake" these senses in order to appear to be authentic. Furthermore, Study 2 suggests that there are conditions under which leaders with high sense of uniqueness and high sense of belongingness are perceived as being inconsistent. Thus, organizations should be cautious in selecting leaders based on self-identifications. Second, our findings also have implications for how leaders can make followers perceive their authenticity. Specifically, our findings suggest that leaders should send clear signals that they have coherent self-concepts. From this self-concept consistency, followers can clearly see a leader's true self. In order to convey to followers that they have a consistent self-concept, leaders need to have a high sense of belongingness and/or a high sense of uniqueness. However, leaders should be cautious that in pursuit of perceived authenticity, they should follow their true feelings rather than follow what are the "right" prescriptions for being perceived as authentic. This attempt may backfire and make them appear inauthentic in the eyes of followers.

## Limitations and future research

First, although we found similar results in China and the Netherlands, we used two different methodologies including a survey and an experiment in two studies. Thus, it is not clear if our findings are generalizable to different cultures. Given that China has a collectivist culture while the Netherlands has an individualistic culture (Hofstede 2003), culture may be

an important moderator for the relationship between leaders' self-identification and followers' perceived leader authenticity. For example, it is possible that when a leader has a high sense of belongingness, the relationship between sense of uniqueness and perceived leader authenticity is more negative in China than in the Netherlands. Future research could examine culture as a moderator for the relationship between the two senses and perceived authenticity.

Although we have shown that perceived self-concept consistency is an important mechanism that explains the relationship between leaders' self-identifications and perceived leader authenticity, it is possible that other mechanisms are also at play. For example, a recent paper by Boekhorst (2015) has shown that authentic leaders are more likely to exhibit behaviors that reflect a sense of belongingness and uniqueness. Through their behaviors, they create a work climate that promotes authenticity. Applying these findings to our study, it is possible that leaders with a high sense of uniqueness and/or a high sense of belongingness create an authentic work climate. As the person who endorses this work climate, followers see the leader as being authentic. Thus, it is possible that the authentic work climate is an additional mechanism that explains (i.e., mediates) the effects of self-identifications on perceived leader authenticity. Future research should examine other mechanisms that convey leaders' self-identifications to followers and illuminate leaders' authenticity.

Although we have shown that leaders with a high sense of uniqueness and/or a high sense of belongingness are perceived as authentic, we do not necessarily suggest that authenticity is an inherently positive quality with positive interpersonal outcomes. For example, it is possible that an egocentric and Machiavellian person who endorses a high sense of uniqueness and a low sense of belongingness is perceived as authentic. However, this authenticity may not entail positive interpersonal outcomes (Sendjaya et al. 2016). For example, Sendjaya and colleagues (2016) found that authentic leaders scoring high on Machiavellianism are more likely to act in an unethical way. Thus, future research should

examine how personalities such as narcissism, egoism, and Machiavellianism moderate the relationship between perceived authenticity and interpersonal outcomes. Furthermore, authenticity scholars have proposed the “authenticity paradox”, indicating that being authentic may hinder leaders from taking on new challenges and bigger roles (Ford and Harding 2011; Gardner and Coglisier 2008; Ibarra 2015). This is because a leader who is true to the (current) self may experience conflict with his or her developing future self. Thus, future research should examine whether perceived authenticity that is based on different self-identifications has different interpersonal consequences.

The interactive effects were relatively small in magnitude, particularly in the field study. Indeed, such effects are usually small in field studies and hard to detect (Aguinis et al. 2005). This is due to methodological (e.g., lack of control) and statistical limitations (i.e., measurement error in the independent variable and the moderator is compounded when both variables are multiplied to obtain the interaction term; McClelland and Judd 1993). However, given that we still find such significant effects even in face of such limitations that typically suppress these effects, small effect sizes should not be considered as trivial (Evans 1985). Specifically, we suggest that even if the true population effects would equal our effect size, our findings have implications because leaders usually supervise more than one follower. When leaders are perceived as authentic by one follower, it is possible that other followers also perceive these leaders as authentic (Fields 2007). This suggests that leaders' self-identifications have the potential to influence a large number of followers even though they have a relatively small effect.

## Conclusion

As indicated by the example of political leader Hilary Clinton at the beginning of our paper, perceived inauthenticity can have detrimental interpersonal consequences. Thus, it is important to know what determines followers' perception of a leader's authenticity. Our

research shows that two fundamental identifications that define the self - i.e., sense of uniqueness and belongingness - interact to influence followers' perceived leader authenticity. Specifically, when a leader has a low sense of belongingness, sense of uniqueness is positively related to perceived leader authenticity. When a leader has a low sense of uniqueness, sense of belongingness positively related to perceived leader authenticity. Perceived self-concept consistency mediates this interactive effect on perceived leader authenticity. We hope this research stimulates further efforts to study the antecedents of perceived leader authenticity.

### **Ethical approval**

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

### **Informed consent**

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the studies.

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# ANTECEDENTS OF FOLLOWERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEADER AUTHENTICITY

**Table 1**

Descriptive Statistics in Study 1

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Leaders' sense of belongingness	4.16	.50						
2. Leaders' sense of uniqueness	3.94	.51	.39**					
3. Perceived self-concept consistency	3.46	.74	.18*	.16*				
4. Perceived self-alienation	2.20	.79	-.29**	-.29**	-.68**			
5. Perceived authentic living	3.85	.60	.21**	.21**	.19*	-.14		
6. Perceived accepting external influence	2.98	.84	.04	-.10	-.61**	.41**	.02	
7. Perceived leader authenticity	3.56	.51	.21**	.28**	.76**	-.79**	.46**	-.75**

*Note.* *N* = 160. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Table 2**

Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis in Study 1

	Perceived Self-concept Consistency					
	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$
Leaders' sense of belongingness (LB)	.10	.06	.14	.02	.07	.03
Leaders' sense of uniqueness (LU)	.08	.06	.10	.08	.06	.11
LB $\times$ LU				-.14	.04	-.27**
Adjusted $R^2$		.03			.08	
$\Delta R^2$					.06	
<i>F</i> change					10.32**	
Df		157			156	

*Note.*  $N = 160$ . The table presents the unstandardized *b*-coefficients, the standardized *b*-coefficients, and standard errors for centered variables. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

# ANTECEDENTS OF FOLLOWERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEADER AUTHENTICITY

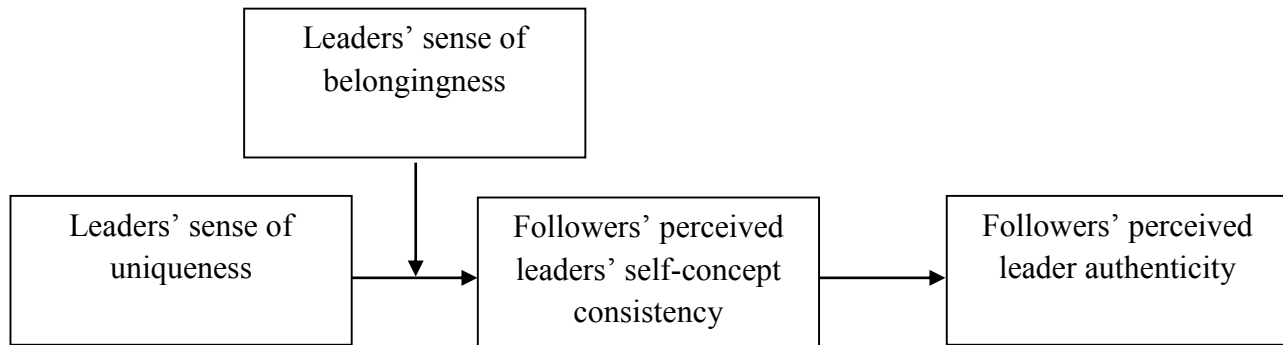
**Table 3**

Moderated mediation results in Study 1 & 2

Study 1 (N = 160)						
Sense of uniqueness	Direct effect of belongingness on authenticity	Boost SE <sup>a</sup>	95% CI	Indirect effect of belongingness on authenticity	Boost SE <sup>a</sup>	95% CI
Low	0.00	0.03	[-0.05, 0.06]	0.08*	0.03	[0.02, 0.14]
High	0.02	0.04	[-0.06, 0.11]	-0.06	0.06	[-0.17, 0.05]
Sense of belongingness	Direct effect of uniqueness on authenticity	Boost SE <sup>a</sup>	95% CI	Indirect effect of uniqueness on authenticity	Boost SE <sup>a</sup>	95% CI
Low	0.07	0.04	[0.00, 0.14]	0.11*	0.04	[0.03, 0.20]
High	0.09*	0.03	[0.02, 0.16]	-0.03	0.04	[-0.11, 0.06]
Study 2 (N = 102)						
Sense of uniqueness	Direct effect of belongingness on authenticity	Boost SE <sup>a</sup>	95% CI	Indirect effect of belongingness on authenticity	Boost SE <sup>a</sup>	95% CI
Low	0.75***	0.22	[0.31, 1.19]	0.21*	0.10	[0.03, 0.44]
High	0.35 <sup>†</sup>	0.20	[-0.04, 0.75]	-0.03	0.05	[-0.19, 0.04]
Sense of belongingness	Direct effect of uniqueness on authenticity	Boost SE <sup>a</sup>	95% CI	Indirect effect of uniqueness on authenticity	Boost SE <sup>a</sup>	95% CI
Low	0.44*	0.21	[0.03, 0.85]	0.13*	0.08	[0.02, 0.33]
High	0.05	0.21	[-0.36, 0.45]	-0.11*	0.07	[-0.30, -0.01]

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .1$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Note. CI = confidence intervals. a Estimates for standard error (SE) were bootstrapped for 5000 times

## ANTECEDENTS OF FOLLOWERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEADER AUTHENTICITY



*Figure 1. Research Model*

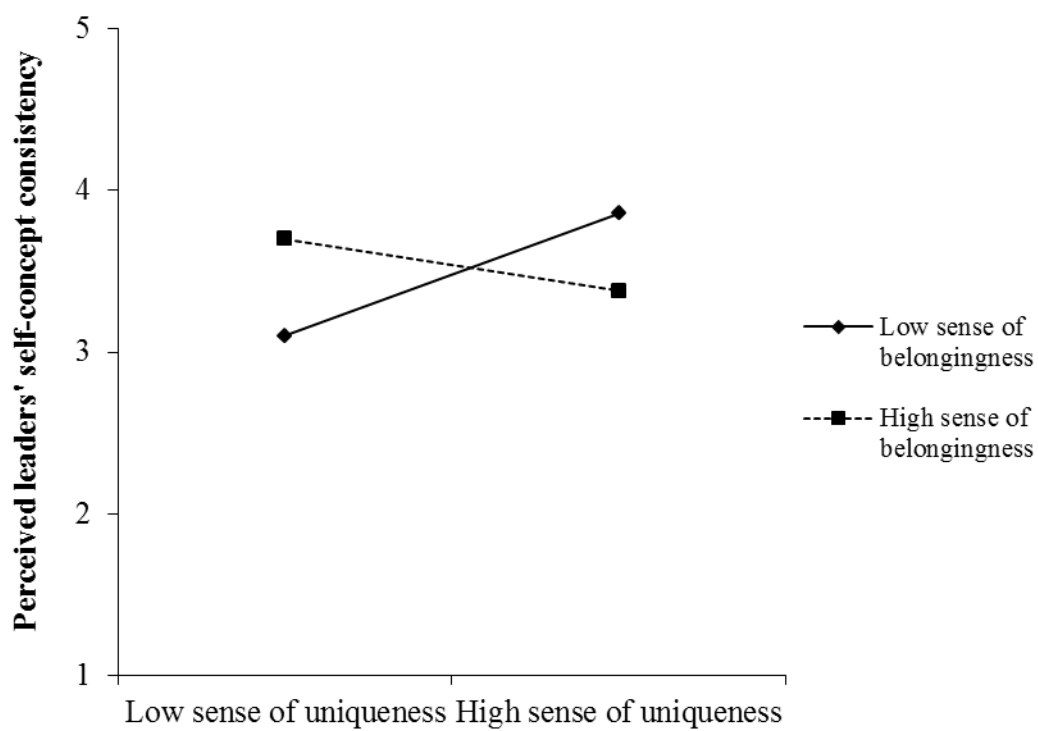


Figure 2. The interactive effect of leaders' sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness on perceived leaders' self-concept consistency (Study 1)

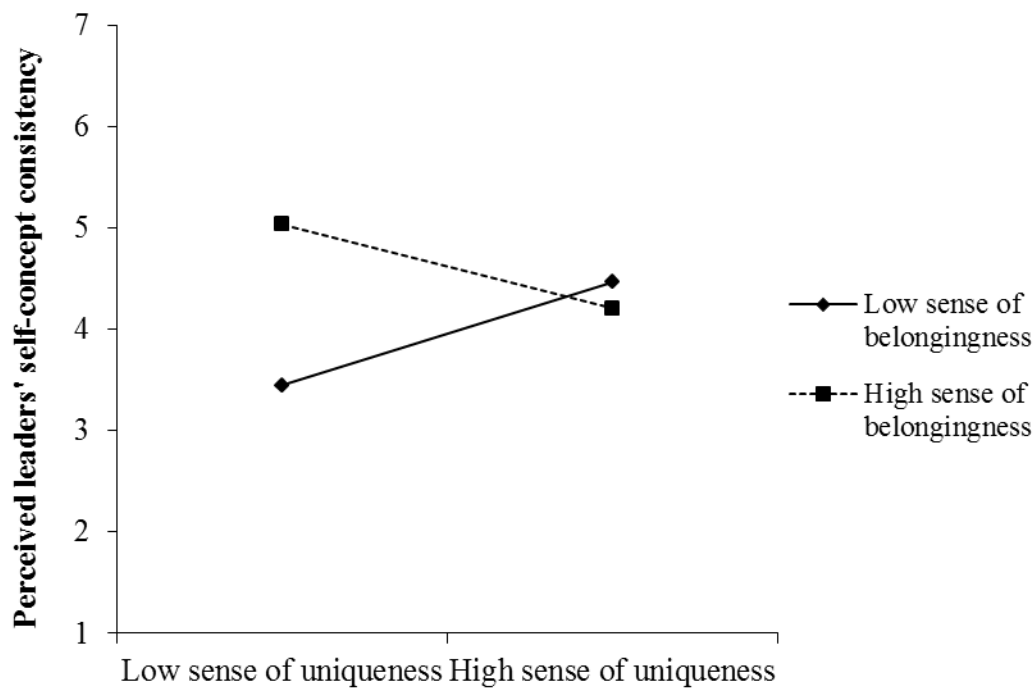


Figure 3. The interactive effect of leaders' sense of uniqueness and sense of belongingness on perceived leaders' self-concept consistency (Study 2)